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(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): ASTRAZENECA AB [SE/SE]; S-151 85 Södertälje (SE).

(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): FREGLER, Christina [SE/SE]; AstraZeneca R & D Mölndal, S-431 83 Mölndal (SE). VON UNGE, Sverker [SE/SE]; AstraZeneca R & D Mölndal, S-431 83 Mölndal (SE).

(74) Agent: ASTRAZENECA; Global Intellectual Property, S-151 85 Södertälje (SE).

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(54) Title: NEW COMPOUNDS USEFUL FOR THE SYNTHESIS OF S- AND R-OMEPRAZOLE AND A PROCESS FOR THEIR PREPARATION

(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to an improved method for the synthesis of the (*S*)- or (*R*)- enantiomer of omeprazole, characterized in that 2-[[4-X-3,5-dimethylpyridin-2-yl)methyl]thio]-5-methoxy-1H-benzimidazole or 2-[[[(4-X-3,5-dimethyl-1-oxido)pyridin-2-yl)methyl]thio]-5-methoxy-1H-benzimidazole, wherein X is a leaving group, is oxidized into the corresponding sulphoxide which is obtained as a crystalline compound. Recrystallisation of the thus obtained sulphoxide results in a compound of enhanced chemical and optical purity, which is subsequently transformed into the (*S*)- or (*R*)- enantiomer of omeprazole.